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## Grounded no more: Laughlin's T-6s now cleared to fly

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9/21/2011 - **LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Texas** -- Laughlin maintainers banded together and inspected nearly every T-6A Texan II aircraft during a 46 hour window ensuring pilot training here continues without any problems.

The actions came after a command order to ground all T-6 aircraft was implemented Sept. 16 to all Air Education and Training Command installations until cleared after a non-destructive inspection.

The immediate inspection came about when an in-flight T-6 suffered a crack in the rear lower control stick horn, which helps control the aircraft.

The aircraft, controlled by an instructor and student pilot, was limited with control. After the rear stick cracked, the pilot was only able to control side-to-side movements while the front controlled up and down.

After landing safely, the command issued all bases to perform an inspection, which Laughlin began at 6:30 p.m. Sept. 16 on their T-6 inventory.

Laughlin's egress and NDI maintenance sections came together kicking off 24-hour operations with approximately 25 people on each 12-hour shift.

"Our guy's rose up and volunteered," Horton said. "That's the kind of people we have here at Laughlin."

While the grounding of the fleet took away about 125 sorties Friday afternoon, Garry Horton, retired chief master sergeant and T-6 Maintenance Division chief, said the problem could have taken almost a week to correct and the base could have lost more training hours.

"We got our volunteers together and started working around the clock," Horton said. "When I came in Saturday at seven o'clock there were nine airplanes done."

Horton explained how the different units worked together to inspect more aircraft faster.

The separate units devised a system that incorporated each of its specialties. Maintenance brought the aircraft into the hangar then egress removed the seats to allow NDI to conduct the inspections and ultimately save training hours and restore Laughlin operations back to normal.

"We had aircraft on both sides of the hangar and people were constantly moving," Horton said. "They were bringing planes in while seats were coming out and inspections were being done. I never worried about our guys. They all came together so well. This is what we do."

Horton noted when he went in to work Sunday morning, 60 aircraft were completed. On average, each aircraft took between 60 and 90 minutes.

After 46 hours and 30 minutes of non-stop work, the short notice team completed all inspections of T-6 aircraft Sunday afternoon at 4 p.m. After checking more than 200 individual lower control stick horns, four were found defective.

### Photos



LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Texas - Members of the 47th Maintenance Directorate review paper work before conducting maintenance on a T-6A Texan II aircraft here Sept. 21. Fifty people from the directorate came together Sept. 16-18 to inspect Laughlin's entire T-6 fleet after a command order by the Air Education and Training Command was given for them to be grounded. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Scott Saldukas)

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"Upon completion of our inspections, we found that three rear and one front were cracked," said Mike Peabody, NDI inspector. "We searched for any crack bigger than 20 thousandths of an inch that can't be seen by the naked eye."

The aircraft that were identified will remain grounded until new parts arrive and are replaced.

While the mission was fixed after a week's worth of work crammed into a weekend, a unanimous "I'm tired" came from a group of weekend warriors when asked about how they felt about their accomplishments.

"It was tough, but it felt good to watch that first plane take off Monday morning," said Michael Reyes of the egress shop here. "Everyone really came together to get it done."



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